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ABSTRACT

Interest groups have historically contributed more to the maintenance of existing national educational policies and programs than to the creation or shaping of new ones. The uncertain political acceptance of the recently increased federal role in education complicates attempts to predict the degree of change in policy development to expect during the 1980s. A review of the history of federal educational policy and the group pressures affecting it emphasizes how partisan, how ideological, and how conflictual an arena this has been. Dominance of both the Congress and the White House by either Republicans or Democrats has allowed rapid, decisive change. Interest groups have retarded or modified shifts in educational funding levels only when the balance of power between the two parties has been fairly even. Current Republican dominance in policy development could increase if economic conditions improve, though the improved conditions could make Republican funding and regulation reductions seem less necessary. On the other hand, poor economic conditions could lead to the return of the Democrats to power while making increased spending less appealing. The future of the federal role in education will apparently depend more on the outcome of future elections than on the influence of interest groups. (Author/PGD)

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INTEREST GROUPS AND THE FUTURE OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY

by
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Interest group activity ranks among the most visible contributors to policy change in modern industrial societies. American myths, and a good deal of political science literature, suggest not only a high public profile for interest groups but profound policy influence as well (Dahl, 1961; Truman, 1965). For many sympathetic analysts, interest groups serve not only as reservoirs of pertinent information but, even more, as critical intermediaries between the state and the public. Many critical scholars contend that group activities are so pervasive that they can hardly be distinguished from the activities of agencies, bureaus, and legislative committees and other bodies who exercise formal policy-making authority. In their view, the power of well-organized groups is so extensive that it virtually isolates the policy-making process from other outside influences. In short, whether groups are praised or blamed, their power is often assumed.

Analyses of federal education policy are not excepted from this interpretation. Educational interest groups were blamed for policy stagnation in the fifties, applauded for their unified vigorous efforts to maintain federal funding in the early seventies, credited with a Presidential victory in 1976, and hailed (or condemned) for creating a new Department of Education in 1978. They appear regularly on the stage that determines federal education policy, and have expanded in number and membership as federal programs have fragmented and proliferated.

Yet, many studies of group influence may confuse high visibility with political muscle. Because interest groups often need to show their members that

they "make a difference," group leaders are anxious to provide glowing accounts of battles fought and wars won. The same events viewed in historical or comparative perspective, however, may reveal only that a group, while happening to find itself on the winning side, did not necessarily contribute significantly to the victory. Indeed, an equally, if not more compelling, set of counter studies have found group influence to be more circumscribed (Bauer, de Sola Pool & Dexter, 1972; Peterson, 1972, pp. 381-402). Especially when analyzing the forces introducing new policies, the main focus of this paper, one seldom finds groups to be the vital innovative factor. While they at times climb on a new policy bandwagon, the change is usually more the product of national crisis, Presidential leadership, or a powerful wave of public opinion. Groups are more effective at retarding innovation (Lowi, 1969; Wilson, 1973). Once programs are in place, groups help sustain and marginally expand their operations. Yet, even when fighting to hold their own, groups are not always successful. Their favorite programs and most cherished policies can be swamped by some new political tide oblivious to pre-existing arrangements.

The historical role of groups in the formation of national education policy has been quite consistent with this more circumscribed view. Nationally, education interest groups, instead of serving as agents of change, seem to respond more to political circumstances. They often maintain political support for favored policies by supplying information, publicity, and pressure, but they are rarely the sculptors who substantially shape new federal programs. It is true that interest groups have often used the resources available to them, and they undeniably tried to redirect federal programs. Their contributions, however, have neither dominated federal policy nor frequently culminated in laws and programs tailored to their recommendations. Their greatest impact has been one of policy maintenance.

During the century that transpired between the conclusion of the Civil War and the beginning of the Great Society, education interest groups were increasingly active, but they found only a painstakingly slow Washington response to their endeavors. Interest groups could at times nudge various pieces of education-related legislation, but these occasional breakthroughs were primarily attributable to political circumstances. For example, the 1917 Smith-Hughes vocational education act was vigorously backed by the American Vocational Association (AVA), but its passage was far more attributable to national concern with post-war labor conditions than to any group pressures, Education, of course, received greater federal level prominence in the 1960s, with the ascension of a leader who sought the mantle of the "Education President" and a series of political changes which offered opportunity for unprecedented policy innovation. Education interest groups continued to attempt to influence federal policy during this period, and, no doubt, did have varying degrees of impact. In particular, interest groups may have contributed to the fragmentation of federal education policy into its present amalgam of specialized programs. Nonetheless, they have remained largely at the margins of policy making. Despite the avalanche of legislation enacted during the past two decades, one observer noted: "Actually, the 1960s and the early 1970s showed the lobbies to be rather ineffectual in getting their way in authorizing legislation" (Summerfield, 1974, p. 22). Instead of directly shaping policy, education interest groups remained near the policy-making process, cajoling and prodding where possible.

Where educational groups have had influence, they have seldom been the sources of innovation and change. Instead, interest groups have historically acted as a stabilizing, conservatizing force in education. The 1980s promise new political directions, many dramatic in nature and threatening to the status

quo; but it would not be in keeping with historical findings to project a leading group role in the initiation of these alterations. Regardless of the shape and extent of federal education policy changes that will be made in subsequent years, interest groups will likely be reacting to events caused by other factors, perhaps affecting the pace of change but having only modest effect on the outcome. A more careful projection of the role of interest groups in the 1980s, however, requires more detailed reconstruction of the historic role of interest groups at the federal level. This process must include consideration of the different types of organizations which can be depicted as "education interest groups" and have been active at the federal level, in order to avoid any impression that some single organizational form is characteristic of the myriad of groups which fall beneath the "educational" umbrella.

Having some understanding of past developments will enable us to make some tentative projections of trends in group activities and federal programs in the 1980s. We shall argue that partisan political and economic growth factors are likely to have the greatest influence. If the Republican party remains dominant, growth in group influence and federal expenditures is much less likely than if the Democrats are returned to power. Also, educational finances are likely to suffer more if economic stagnation continues than if the country enjoys renewed prosperity. These projections may also be affected by the way in which the politics of nonpublic school aid is treated. In the final section of the paper we delineate three possible developments in a policy arena that may become increasingly important in the 1980s.

Interest Groups and Educational Policy Prior to 1960

Education interest groups of the 19th Century lacked the resources and sophistication of their later counterparts, and they did not enjoy the Congressional receptivity to federal education programs endemic to the 1960s. They did, however, emerge on the Washington scene in years following the Civil War and found their political impact circumscribed in ways not dramatically different from their successors in subsequent generations. The capacity to inform and prod certain representatives into action was demonstrated, but did not culminate in the manifestation of any noteworthy federal policies. Instead, interest groups were more potent when they attacked legislative proposals that seemed to threaten the status quo.

One of the most dramatic -- and earliest -- renditions of this pattern of influence through veto occurred in the 1870s, when a variety of forces worked to blunt the proposal of the Republican representative from Rhode Island, George Hoar, to establish a "national system of education" which would create federal standards that would be implemented by the states. "Violent blasts of denunciation" were issued by diverse education interest groups including the National Education Association (NEA). In this rare instance, even Catholic organizations joined ranks with the public educators in voicing opposition. Both feared an intractable federal influence, although they obviously perceived the threat in somewhat differing terms.

Subsequent pieces of legislation subdivided the groups along more predictable lines. Public education groups such as NEA supported a variety of proposals raised during the 1870s and 80s, ranging from creation of an education fund from proceeds of federal land sales to a direct matching grants program for education. The latter proposal represented the first in which the

"education profession" became active "in an organized way and on a national scale" (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1980, p. 34). Private school supporters, predictably, opposed any aid proposal which worked to their competitive disadvantage. Indeed, this initial struggle over federal aid has been said to be responsible for having "created a committed education lobby" (Ibid., p. 36). NEA's possession of offices in Washington, of course, differed markedly from being an effective body capable of influencing federal policy. The characteristic legislative response to the early proposals was defeat, with the verdict frequently resounding. In fact, the absence of any demonstrable Congressional support for education aid suggested that the touted "veto" power of interest groups was largely irrelevant.

Interest group activity increased in successive decades, but it still found little Congressional receptivity to demands for broad federally-funded education programs. The battle for general aid to public education, for example, was an unending struggle encountering changing obstacles that denied success over several decades. From the beginning, teacher organizations, with the help of their labor allies and some backing from other educational groups, faced the opposition of business, farm and patriotic groups, who felt that education was a local matter that should be free of federal shackles and controls. Immediately after World War II, general aid to public education began to gain serious attention, but was bedeviled by the problem of nonpublic schools. On the one side, Congressmen with strong Catholic constituencies came under pressure to include aid to nonpublic schools in any program, while on the other side, Protestant groups and many public educators felt that such assistance was a violation of the separation of church and state as protected by the First Amendment. This controversy was temporarily quieted in the 1950s,

but was soon replaced by the even more intractable problem of school segregation. After the Brown decision had declared segregated schools unconstitutional, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) insisted that no federal monies be given to segregated schools, a provision which was stoutly resisted by Representatives and Senators from southern states. Every time Adam Clayton Powell, the black Representative from Harlem, offered his anti-segregation amendment, it gained the support of northern Republican representatives, eager to establish a pro-civil rights record. However, many of these same Republicans were opposed to general school aid, whether or not it went to segregated schools, and they then voted to defeat the bill with the help of southern Democrats, unable to support a law hastening desegregation.

School aid supporters attempted to gain votes with various modifications of their proposals, such as focusing on monies for construction purposes, instead of teacher salaries or other current operating expenses. This milder form of federal aid secured some additional support, as it carried fewer implications of federal control and made a more modest funding commitment. Catholics, too, felt that this more limited federal program was less threatening to nonpublic education. But it was not always easy to hold the pro-school aid coalition together around a compromise formula. The teacher organizations, in particular, often felt that it was better to forego passage of any legislation and campaign instead against Congressmen who frustrated their objectives. Two of the most astute analysts of this period, Frank Munger and Richard Fenno, observed: NEA's "insistence on teachers' salary provisions as the price of their wholehearted support . . . severely restricted the legislative maneuverability of their Congressional cohorts" (Munger & Fenno,

1962, pp, 165-6). In the words of one Democrat: "They want the moon. Their attitude is that they might as well try a big bite and go down fighting rather than to establish a new area of federal responsibility in a small scale reasonable way" (Ibid., p. 166).

But it would be wrong to blame defeat solely -- or even largely -- on the zealotry of school aid supporters. Opposition to federal participation ran deep, and public support was too lackluster to provide a mandate for new programs. In fact, the conflict over general school aid touched so many sensitive nerves in the body politic that groups that had only a marginal stake in education often had at least as much influence as did any of the more specifically school-oriented organizations. During the 1940s the controversy engaged not only the Catholic archdiocese but also the National Council of Churches. In the 1950s southerners and civil rights groups pushed the school teachers from central stage. Throughout the entire course of the controversy the AFL-CIO backed federal aid proposals, while the Chamber of Commerce, the Farm Bureau, and many patriotic groups were firmly opposed to creeping federal control. Above all, partisan political conflicts between the two major political parties profoundly affected the course of the general school aid controversy. In light of these forces, school groups had only marginal influence and policy innovation was negligible.

The First Generation of Categoricals

These difficulties account for the current proliferation of categorical programs in education. What could not be gained by frontal assault was secured -- unwittingly and only in part -- by flanking movements and end runs. If a general aid bill could not pass Congress, occasionally more successful were small,

narrowly defined, relatively inexpensive proposals addressing specific needs that seemed especially pertinent amid certain historical exigencies. The federal role in education expanded not by any overall set of planned policies but by segmented accretion. By defining their mission narrowly, specialized programs escaped embroilment in the religious, racial, and ideological disputes that marked the general aid controversy.

Even in the development of these categorical programs, interest group activity was more the product of policy innovation than its initial cause. Instead, broad strategic concerns were the driving force behind the three most significant innovations: vocational education, impact aid, and the National Defense Education Act. But if interest groups played only marginal roles in their initial passage, they helped sustain these programs after the initial impetus had passed. As Stephen Bailey observed, "the dramatic increase in federal contracts, grants, and formula aid served as a magnet to draw distant association headquarters like iron filings to the field of force of the nation's capital" (Bailey, 1975, p. ix).

The oldest among this pre-1960s triumvirate of categorical programs, the Smith-Hughes Act, set a pattern by which a major national concern gave rise to national educational innovation in an area previously reserved to state and local school districts. Smith-Hughes emerged at a time of mounting public concern about the challenge posed by growing German industrial might, a strength which some believed was facilitated by that country's elaborate system of vocational education. Many political and industrial leaders wondered whether the United States had a sufficiently trained work force to meet the material needs of a World War or to make an appropriate adjustment to an increasingly technical industrial economy. Vocational education was widely touted as a

panacea by educators, businessmen and labor leaders alike. Views differed over how vocational education should be organized -- businessmen wanted the establishment of separate schools closely aligned to particular industries, while labor and school people wanted vocational education integrated into regular public school programming -- but these differences were compromised in the face of an increasing German threat. All groups, together with the public in general, rallied behind Smith-Hughes, which was expected to meet the "great and crying need" for vocational education (Lazerson & Grubb, 1974, p. 28).

Interest group activity helped to stabilize and perpetuate vocational education policy in subsequent decades. The law has been amended and modified over the years, but it has always maintained close ties to the American Vocational Association (AVA), which many claim to be the "granddad" of all educational interest groups. While this title overlooks the early role of the National Education Association, it does correctly point to the fact that from the beginning more specialized educational interests have had the greatest relative success. Even though AVA seems to have been only a marginal factor in the initial establishment of Smith-Hughes, it did help preserve the program during ensuing decades, long after the German threat had disappeared and American economic dominance was firmly established. AVA, like vocational education more generally, traditionally had a southern, rural bias. Although funds were distributed to all states, vocational monies seemed to be used more in rural areas and for agriculturally-related occupational training. By supporting such an emphasis, AVA ingratiated itself with Congressional committees that tended to be dominated by southerners who enjoyed high rank and seniority. During its heyday, it could even be said that "the position of AVA

virtually determined the federal government's vocational education policy" (Summerfield, 1974, p. 36).

This attribution, however, stems more from AVA's longstanding visibility in federal education policy rather than any demonstrable effectiveness in producing change. Not only did external forces shape the original political opportunity for Smith-Hughes, but the concept of vocational education also retained general popularity in subsequent decades, especially during periods of rising unemployment. The program was a relatively quiet, non-controversial one, with its purpose seemingly noble and of potential long-term contribution to the economic well-being of the nation. When AVA articulated the need for federal assistance to help maintain existing programs, it appeared influential in part because it faced little in the way of organized opposition. Furthermore, it was unable to expand dramatically the program in the forties and fifties, however desirous its constituents might have been of such a development. As can be seen in Table I, even as late as 1960 the vocational education program amounted to little more than forty-five million dollars. This premier vocational education interest group, therefore, was limited to a supportive role, one that maintained existing programs rather than one that served as a catalyst for expansion or change.

Nothing clarified more the limits on AVA's influence than did the change in vocational education policy occurring during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. AVA secured John Kennedy's campaign promise to expand vocational programs, but the administration translated that commitment through an alternative view of vocational education diverging substantially from AVA's perspective. The Kennedy Administration and an increasingly urbanized Congress contended that vocational monies should both help prepare students for more

technically sophisticated occupations in growing segments of the economy and help offset minority unemployment in urban areas. The new leadership of the Office of Education also wanted to assume more supervisory and administrative responsibility over the use of vocational funds. This reshuffling of the status quo was resisted by AVA, and the resulting legislative proposal was a compromise between Kennedy Administration proposals and AVA concerns. With the assassination of President Kennedy, further resistance by AVA to this new agenda became impossible and the law quickly passed Congress to become one of the first major planks of the Great Society. AVA constituents enjoyed significant federal funding increases, but the terms on which funds were distributed were quite different from those the interest group had anticipated when it endorsed the Kennedy candidacy. During the next decade, AVA itself began to adapt to the changed political circumstances; it soon became as proud and protective of the new vocational emphasis as it had been of the earlier one. Groups seem to adapt to policy as much as policy responds to group influence.

Aid to federally impacted areas, though one of the largest federal programs, was also a creature of political circumstances that cannot be attributed to the actions of education interest groups. Like Smith-Hughes, impact aid has had strong defense overtones because much of its emphasis has been directed toward compensation for education services in areas adjacent to military installations. Impact aid has been revised at numerous junctures and has emerged as a broad program designed to correct the additional burdens imposed on local areas by the presence of concentrations of federal employees and their families. In fact, the frequent program alterations have consistently broadened the number of "federally impacted" communities eligible for federal assistance.

The first impact aid program was created on a temporary basis during World War II, and was re-established and broadened in scope in 1950 when two House subcommittees jointly reported "that the federal presence was creating severe burdens in many school districts" (Peterson, forthcoming). Since that time, impact aid has emerged as a political favorite in Congress because of its wide distribution and at the local level because of its relative lack of administrative requirements. Major interest groups, however, have been uncharacteristically quiet in impact aid debates during the past three decades, and have not exerted particular influence to assure its continuation, substantially increase its funding, or alter its emphases. The one exception to this generalization is the highly specialized group representing districts receiving impact aid, the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools, which has been quite successful in maintaining and expanding Congressional funding for the program (see Table 1).

When Congress passed the National Defense Education Act, the last of the early categoricals, it was once again largely oblivious to the concerns of education interest groups. Its programs were tailored by Eisenhower Administration and Congressional legislative experts in response to the wave of public concern over the nation's education system, provoked by the successful Soviet launching of Sputnik. Certain aspects of what eventually became NDEA were under consideration prior to Sputnik, but the perceived threat to American defense riveted attention on a proposal to use federal dollars to improve the nation's scientific education programs.

Indeed, national defense became the rationale for this education proposal as the religious and racial issues that submerged other general aid proposals were surmounted. Parochial school advocates did obtain support for a small

program of loans for private schools, but the major interest groups, including those particularly concerned with racial segregation, were largely unheeded. "General aid proponents, like the NEA, were disappointed by the size and scope of the measure," but "skillful leadership and an atmosphere that favored action enabled the bill to 'breeze' through both Houses of Congress" (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, p. 59). Many large groups were generally exempted from making any substantial input initially, and they had only minimal contact with it in subsequent years because of its principal emphasis on supplies and equipment for science, mathematics, and foreign language instruction. Funding levels were relatively small and have consistently remained modest despite repeated legislative alterations, which have expanded the number of curricular areas eligible for funds.

The diffusion of NDEA's purposes, and its eventual incorporation into the consolidated programs section of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1973 may be due to a lack of specialized group support. Unlike vocational education, which has always been backed by AVA, NDEA never won the same intense, focused support from a group with a single-minded commitment to science and math education. We do not know whether the absence of such a group contributed to the demise of NDEA as a distinctive program, but there is nonetheless the suggestion that group support is most valuable in sustaining programs in the quiet years after the traumas that gave rise to their birth have passed. In any case, NDEA, lacking such support, never expanded much beyond its original size and eventually disappeared as a distinctive program (see Table 1).

Launching the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

The elections of 1960 and 1964 demonstrated how rapidly political paradigms can be restructured and policy alternatives can be reformulated into

substantive legislation. Broad coalitions were formed during the sixties to line up behind compromise positions largely shaped by executive and legislative branch leaders. Interest group visibility clearly soared as education became an increasingly prominent federal issue, but the significance of its policy influence may not have risen proportionately with either its public image or the expansion in federal programs and funding.

The most dramatic rendition of the changed political circumstances of the 1960s was, of course, the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. While the law provided for greatly increased support for public education, it hardly took the form that traditional education interest groups had long advocated. Instead of a program of general aid, the legislation called for concentration of resources on the needs of educationally disadvantaged children living in low-income areas. Offered as part of the Great Society's campaign against poverty, the policy was addressed to problems of discrimination and racial unrest, matters that had previously thwarted passage of legislation. The proposal itself was developed by a secret task force created by the Johnson Administration shortly after the President had been re-elected in a landslide with an overwhelmingly liberal Democratic majority in Congress. It was proposed in the very beginning of the 1965 session of Congress and was passed so quickly with so little deliberation on the floor of Congress that it was known by opponents as the "Railroad Act of 1965." In order to keep the bill from becoming bogged down in subcommittee debates and group demands, the bill was passed in exactly the same form in both Houses of Congress, thereby precluding the need for a conference committee that might have become a focal point of group pressure.

Presidential support was so intense and the balance of power in Congress

so one-sided that groups realized that nothing would stop this policy innovation. Under the circumstances, interest groups made concessions and accepted policy proposals that in other circumstances they might have fought bitterly. Parochial school groups, for example, "believed they might be written out of a massive and permanent federal aid program" if recalcitrant on ESEA; public school groups, on the other hand, "feared that a failure to cooperate on the legislation would produce dire consequences /for them/ during implementation." In the words of two analysts of the Congressional situation, the election of 1964 changed the political "environment sufficiently to move the two principal groups to positions of tolerance and flexibility on a legislative program which they both would have opposed under different conditions" (Eidenberg & Morey, 1969, p. 86).

Broad interest group support for ESEA did not, of course, mean that the principal groups merely capitulated to the desires of the executive. Francis Keppel, the new Commissioner of Education, had to sculpt a program that offered enough enticements to each group to lure them into the coalition, while still keeping the reform-minded thrust that motivated the original proposal. For example, the "child benefit" concept allowed some funds to be used for the welfare of children in nonpublic schools, thereby gaining Catholic support, while still denying any direct allocations to church-related institutions (thereby keeping the bill within limits acceptable to public school people and others concerned about separation of church and state). State departments of education were given special funding, thereby softening the blow that greater federal administrative controls meant for their prestige and autonomy. Yet, taken together, the largest and most important piece of federal legislation ever passed owed more to Presidential leadership and commitments, together with

strong partisan legislative support, than it did to any organized group activities.

Increased Fragmentation and Specialization

As President Lyndon Johnson's political luster began to fade, and as educational funding failed to attain the lofty heights initially anticipated, interest groups became increasingly autonomous participants in the legislative process. Characteristically, as group influence increased, it became increasingly specialized and oriented toward maintenance of existing programming. ESEA, in fact, had hardly emerged from stages of infancy before a host of new interest groups assumed the traditional role of working to maintain the general thrust of the program while seeking to modify it slightly in ways responsive to their special concerns. This burgeoning cavalcade of Title I-related organizations included the National Advisory Council for the Education of Disadvantaged Children, the National Welfare Rights Organization, the Legal Standards and Education Project of the NAACP, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the National Association of Administrators of State and Federally-Assisted Education Programs, and the Education Commission of the States (Kirst & Jung, 1980, p. 25).

The similarity of these organizations surrounding Title I to the old AVA has been little noticed. Like the "granddaddy" that preceded them, these groups have gained considerable influence on a narrowly defined policy area. Moreover, like AVA, they have sought to maintain the basic structure of the existing program, while offering suggested modifications that will focus benefits even more clearly on their specific constituency. They deviate to some extent from AVA, however, in that they have "influenced policy development more by their research and analysis than by any well-defined constituency they

represented" (Peterson, forthcoming). For example, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund released a report in 1969 charging "flagrant violations of the law" (Murphy, 1971, p. 43). The Office of Education responded by forming a task force to examine the issue, and it later made a substantial increase in its administrative staff charged with securing local compliance. Such activity was repeated with some frequency by comparable groups in subsequent years, as specific aspects of Title I, often very technical in nature, were carefully analyzed. The impact of these groups should not be overemphasized, however, for even these reformist organizations, to the extent they have pushed for change, have focused on relatively narrow spheres of program administration and implementation. Otherwise, they have steadfastly supported the program's original conception. Moreover, they have been dependent upon unusual Congressional receptivity to their arguments.

In two other areas -- education for the handicapped and bilingual education -- interest group influence has contributed to policy fragmentation. While in both cases interest groups seem to have contributed materially to the policy outcome, even in these instances of unquestioned group power, the political environment in which they operated also decisively affected their chances for success. In both cases legislative enactments were attributable primarily to an activist judiciary, which endorsed the educational rights that groups were demanding and created a legal mandate for political action.

Court influence was particularly evident in the case of handicapped children, as rulings handed down in 1971 and 1972 on the basis of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments found exclusion of handicapped children from a public education to be discriminatory. The decisions served as forerunners to two major pieces of legislation, the Rehabilitation Services Act of 1973 and the

Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. The latter bill, in fact, "drew heavily on the legal decisions for objectives and procedures in the law" (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, p. 158).

The judicial decisions were themselves a product of group action, to be sure. The Pennsylvania chapter of the National Association for Retarded Children (NARC) had filed the suit that was to have such national repercussions. But the groups that had the greatest influence, such as NARC and the Council for Exceptional Children, were hardly the traditional educational interests that in other contexts have been called the Big Six (Peterson, forthcoming). Instead, the influential groups were suspicious of the public schools and wrote into the law numerous provisions such as due process hearings for parents and requirements that children be educated in the least restrictive environment feasible. Indeed, some of the provisions in the 1975 legislation, such as those pertaining to educational "mainstreaming," have met with outright opposition from teacher organizations. Thus, to the extent that group power was exercised, it was once again the power of a more specialized interest at work, and the program that resulted contributed once again to increasing fragmentation of federal programming in education.

The judicial capacity to open new political opportunities for specialized interest groups was also demonstrated in the case of bilingual education. The 1974 Supreme Court decision (Lau v. Nichols) was not as far-reaching as were the decisions made in connection with the handicapped. In this case the Supreme Court rested its judgment on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 instead of the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution. And federal policy change was not as massive either. While in the case of the handicapped, Congress committed itself to an indefinite program of fiscal support for special

education, which eventually increased to nearly one billion dollars, bilingual programs have never been authorized on anything more than a demonstration basis, and funding levels have never exceeded $200 million (see Table 1).

Support for bilingual education was once again carried forward by groups with a specialized interest in this particular program. Many of the most fervent supporters were groups representing the Spanish-speaking communities, byproducts of "a rising political consciousness among Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, and other nationality groups that had been awakened by the civil rights movement" (Peterson, forthcoming). Apart from staff members within the National Education Association's Washington office, the major groups supporting bilingual programming were seldom among the mainline educational interests. Instead, these groups, including the Puerto Rico Forum, the National Congress of Hispanic American Citizens, and the Puerto Rican Association for National Affairs, had a particular interest in the education of Spanish-speaking immigrants from various countries in Latin America. In their area of special interest these groups have proven to be persistent advocates of one strand of federal education policy, working to maintain and expand the program as vigorously as possible. They have more influence than many educational groups, because they seem to speak for an identifiable ethnic minority that presumably evaluates political leaders on the basis of their responsiveness to ethnic concerns. The most recent testimony to the effectiveness of these groups has occurred in recent months, when a well publicized meeting between many of the major bilingual groups and the Secretary of Education apparently persuaded the Reagan Administration to keep bilingual programs separate from the block grant programs that they otherwise were proposing in education.

These innovations in special and bilingual education suggest a greater

interest group role in the past decade than in prior years. Given the proliferation of federal programs and gradual expansion of funding for education, together with an explosion in the total number of active groups, this increased influence has been inevitable. Yet, the triumphs of groups representing the handicapped and language minorities remain in many ways anomalous. Their greatest successes were strongly influenced by judicial decisions, which gave unusual opportunities for influencing legislative action. Unless comparable court decisions are made in other areas, one must guard against generalizing from their successes.

The very proliferation of educational groups may in fact be counterproductive. As the numbers of groups increase, and as their commitments become increasingly specialized, their ability to act together to support an overall federal role may be weakened. Only once did educational groups come together to push for a joint educational package. Was this a great exception or was it a harbinger of group influence in the decade of the eighties? It is to this moment of maximum group influence that we now turn.

Emergency Committee for Full Funding of Education Programs

The 1970s featured substantial swings of support for educational issues by various branches of the federal government. After Johnson's unflinching support for schools, it was probably only inevitable that the executive branch would become more skeptical of educational programs. During the Nixon years, and to a lesser extent, during the Ford Administration, the Administration opposed expansion of educational programs. At the same time Congress remained in Democratic hands, and the executive branch was only marginally able to influence the terms on which educational legislation was passed. As the policy-making process came to be divided between the two political parties,

interest groups gained new capacities to shape programs. We have already seen how these partisan divisions, together with judicial activism, provided groups interested in the handicapped and in bilingualism with opportunities to influence federal policies of special concern to them. The more general interest groups attempted to take advantage of this division of power as well. They resisted impoundment of federal funds, overcame Presidential vetoes, and in general demonstrated a level of political confidence and sophistication not previously demonstrated.

Much interest group activity was nonetheless devoted to the sheer maintenance of existing programs at roughly current levels of funding. Although new federal programs were being added, overall funding levels remained more or less constant throughout the Nixon and Ford Administrations (see Table 1). In constant dollars overall federal funding for education may have actually declined during these years. Even when exercising maximum influence, groups were playing their traditional role of holding the line, relying on Congressional supporters to back them in their contests with what seemed to be a hostile executive.

Most of the educational interest groups responded only lukewarmly to the education revenue sharing concept proposed by the Nixon Administration. Some aspects of the proposal were enticing to the traditional interest groups, particularly its emphasis on reducing federal regulations, which would presumably afford local educators greater flexibility in the use of federal funds. But many educators were afraid that by collapsing the categorical programs into one general block grant, overall funding for education would be reduced. In addition, religious groups such as the U.S. Catholic Conference and National Council of Churches feared that the change would rekindle the debate over aid

to parochial schools, a possibility they considered most undesirable. Civil rights organizations feared the proposed policy would culminate in an abandonment of federal enforcement of equal access provisions of existing laws. "Major support that might have been mobilized under other circumstances was not cultivated," noted one analyst. The Council of State School Officials and the National School Boards Association indicated varying degrees of support for the concept but did not campaign actively for the plan. Crucial groups like the NEA could have gained from unrestricted federal aid but opposed the Education Revenue Sharing" (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1980, p. 119). Interest groups elected once more to assume their historic role as sources of maintenance instead of agents of change, and generally joined forces in opposition. They "preferred to retain an acceptable status quo rather than raise the prospect of upsetting 'the delicately balanced compromise' and risking 'a holy war'" (Ibid., p. 100). The most unifying theme for groups during this period was a common opposition to the threat of substantial reductions in education allocations. The Administration's 1969 proposal to cut education funding $450 million from the previous year alienated the "entire education lobby" in a "single blow" (Ibid., p. 112). Gary Orfield explained that "instead of exploiting the many potential divisions within the education groups and within Congress, the Administration's budget posture created an unprecedented sentiment for unity" (Orfield, 1975, p. 137).

The President's campaign pledge to "Bring Us Together" had unusual potency among education interest groups. They perceived their interests as acutely threatened by the proposed cuts, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, by the revenue sharing concept. This formed an unprecedented alliance of groups united in seeking to minimize the potential damage of the Nixon proposals.

More than seventy organizations, including those representing teachers, school boards, state school officials, parochial schools, civil rights, the handicapped, libraries, instructional material manufacturers, higher education, and noneducation labor unions, joined forces within a coalition labeled the Emergency Committee for Full Funding of Education Programs. These groups managed to set aside their many differences to fight the proposed cutbacks, and relied on "swarms" of volunteer constituents to carry their message to Congress and the news media. The committee was most active during the summer and fall of 1969 when it succeeded in obtaining one billion dollars more for education than the Nixon Administration had proposed, overturning the prestigious House Appropriations Committee on the House floor in the process (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1980, p. 113).

The alliance was a temporary one, however, little more than a short-term deviation from the ongoing process of specialization. The coalition enjoyed unusual public prominence during its short life and produced what seemed to be dramatic results, although it is impossible to determine what funding levels would have been set in absence of the coalition. A comparable but somewhat less powerful coalition was fomred in 1978, during the latter stages of the Congressional battle over tax credits for private school tuition. Approximately forty organizations representing public elementary and secondary educators, labor, civil rights and other constituencies created the National Coalition to Save Public Education and joined forces with the Carter Administration and liberal Congressional Democrats to defeat the proposal. As in the case of the ECFFEP, however, the coalition represented a short-term unification on a single issue and not a lasting coalescence of organizations. The proliferation of fragmented interest groups continued largely unabated in subsequent years.

During the Carter Administration, the many narrowly-defined interest groups competed vigorously for attention and influence. Despite the continuing presence of a relatively strong Congress and a weak President, both of whom were generally receptive to a federal educational role, policy innovation was haphazard at best. Although funding of federal education programs increased substantially (see Table 1), the centerpiece of late 1970's achievement, the creation of a Department of Education, had to be ratified amidst a fractious interest group atmosphere, in which divisiveness among the public education interest group ranks reached an unprecedented peak. Unlike the pre-Great Society years, when pro-public education groups ususally joined forces on the same side of the barricades, the Department of Education brouhaha cut across public education interest group ranks. The National Education Association and the Big Six joined with many advocates of specific categorical programs and labor organizations to support the proposal. However, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Catholic Education Association, and a variety of higher education, civil rights, and labor organizations worked against the proposal. As a result, "months of heated lobbying on the measure split some longtime allies and united some traditional enemies" (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1980, p. 167). This internecine warfare was reflected in continuing debates over the directions of federal policy during the remainder of the Carter years, and has impeded any cohesive interest group response to Reagan Administration proposals to consolidate existing programs, substantially slash funding levels, and usher in an era of retreat in federal activity in education policy. Once again, interest groups remain largely isolated on the margins of policy influence, where they have generally been located since the Civil War.

Group Influence and Federal Policy in the 1980s

If the past is any guide to the future, interest groups are as likely to be influenced by policy as to shape it in the next decade. In general, educational innovations are the product of national crises, judicial decisions, Presidential leadership, and partisan political commitments. While interest groups help sustain programs once enacted and they may help shape the way in which legislation is formulated, the overall direction of educational policy is surprisingly divorced from the play of group politics. Any assessment of the future connections between groups and federal policy must, therefore, take into account other factors that are likely to structure that relationship.

Although many factors could be important, the three most important developments likely to impinge on group activities and educational programs are/economic trends, partisan political relationships and the treatment of overall the nonpublic schools issue (see Table 2). In general, one can expect higher levels of support for education, if economic growth rates increase in the eighties over what they were in the seventies. If the economy weakens and declines, then support for education can be expected to decline precipitously. Politically, the more power remains in the hands of the Republican party, the more the responsibility for educational finance will shift to state and local governments. Should the Democratic party gain renewed strength in Congress and win a Presidential race, one can expect higher levels of public support. These patterns assume that the nonpublic education issue remains a distinctive political issue that does not affect federal support for public education. If the nonpublic school question becomes controversial, it could affect federal policy towards education in general.

In the last section of the paper we shall analyze the future of the

nonpublic schools issue in more detail. But first we shall consider the two major factors -- partisan politics and economic trends -- that are likely to have the greatest direct effect on education. The four possibilities outlined in Table 2 will be discussed in the order we believe they are most likely to occur.

1. Continued Republican strength together with an improving economic situation. Although we are still in the early days of the Reagan Administration, the chances that Republicans will be able to more or less hold their political position during most of the 1980s must be rated as better than even. The President's current popularity is high, a conservative mood seems to be widespread, Congress is responding to executive branch initiatives, and the economy is responding to Administration policies. The Administration also seems to be benefitting from a glut in the world oil market, which is easing the energy costs that drove inflation in the seventies. If these international circumstances help reduce inflation, thereby permitting more expansive monetary policies, the current Administration could enjoy a prosperous economic climate.

Under these circumstances it must be anticipated that the proposed policies of the Reagan Administration will be carried into effect. Federal education expenditures will be distributed through block grants, and overall levels of federal funding will be gradually reduced. However, interest groups can be expected to retard the rate and extent of policy change. It is possible that programs for the disadvantaged, handicapped and bilingual will be excepted from general grant provisions, and, of course, the Administration has not even proposed to fold vocational education in with the other programs. Moreover, group pressures are likely to keep levels of funding at higher levels

than presently anticipated by the Reagan Administration. Especially if economic prosperity eases the pressure on the national budget, the specialized interests, working with allies in Congress, are likely to offset somewhat the present Administration's commitment to a reduction in the federal role.

But even though interest groups will probably modify proposed cuts in educational expenditures, they are unlikely to form a broad coalition that can successfully maintain current levels of federal spending in the same way that they did in the early seventies. With a shift of power decidedly in a conservative direction, interest groups will decide that overt confrontation makes little sense. Instead, each specialized interest is likely to concentrate on saving an aspect of the program in which it has the greatest stake. Over time, the number and types of groups involved in educational policy will change. As categorical give way to block grants, the influence of the specialized interests will weaken, and the power and cohesion of the Bix Six will increase. Once a block grant arrangement is well in place, this coalition will be in a strong position to dominate educational policy and fend off new efforts to create special programs. Gradually, they can be expected to increase the size of the block grant so that funding levels return to their current levels, though this is unlikely until the latter part of the 1980s.

2. Revival of Democratic fortunes coupled with a stagnant economy. If fortune does not favor the Reagan Administration in the way that the first scenario expects, the outcomes for educational policy will be somewhat different. If energy problems continue, inflation does not significantly abate, interest rates remain high, the economy slips into a recession, and unemployment rates rise, then a Democratic revival is likely. Should these trends become evident as early as 1982, the Democratic party might gain even

more in the House of Representatives than is customary for the non-Presidential party in off-year elections. With a stronger majority in the House, with more Democrats in the Senate, and with some Republicans from swing districts less closely aligned to the Administration, interest groups can be expected to build alliances that will maintain existing educational programming. One might even find a re-emergence of the broad coalition that overcame a Presidential veto in the early seventies. Should this be followed by a Democratic victory in 1984, then the federal role in education is likely to expand beyond current levels. However, the unhealthy state of the economy will preclude rapid expansion even under Democratic leadership.

Under these circumstances the existing interest group complex is likely to be largely sustained, and the various categorical programs presently in place modified only marginally. There may be some effort to simplify regulations, and some consolidation of programs, but federal policies will continue to emphasize special programs for disadvantaged groups rather than broad-scale aid for education. Some monies will be weaned away from defense accounts, but given the need for fiscal prudence, only marginal increments can be anticipated.

3. Continued Republican dominance but a declining economic situation. This outcome is much less likely than either of the first two, but it is possible that divisions within the Democratic party could prevent it from capitalizing on the opportunities a declining economic situation gives the opposition party. Also, a foreign policy crisis near election time could give an incumbent President the ability to defeat the opposition in spite of economic difficulties.

Under these circumstances the picture for a federal role in education

would be gloomy indeed. Pressures to reduce expenditures so as to achieve a balanced budget would be so overwhelming as to preclude maintenance of expenditure levels anywhere near their present size -- in either current or constant dollars. Massive cuts in educational expenditures would probably provoke strong interest group resistance, but the groups would probably be unable to overcome the negative impact of both the economic and the political situation.

4. Revival of Democratic strength in an improving economic situation. This is the least likely trend in the 1980s. If the economy gains strength, the present Administration policies will be regarded as successful. However, it is vaguely possible that enough interests will be antagonized by Administration cuts in programs for minorities, the elderly, the medically needy, the schools, and those living in central cities, that Democrats will be able to defeat the Administration even in an improving economic situation. It is also possible that a disaster in foreign policy or the emergence of an especially attractive Democratic candidate for President could offset the advantages that naturally accrue to an incumbent President in prosperous times.

While this pattern is unlikely, it would be of great benefit for those wishing an increased role for the federal government in education. Rising incomes could enable the federal government to increase support for education within the terms of a balanced budget. With Democrats in power, the allies of the pro-schools organizations and the specialized interests would push for higher levels of educational commitment. Existing interest groups in education would solidify their position, the Department of Education would emerge as an important part of the cabinet, and educational policy would come under increasingly centralized direction. There is even the possibility that the

federal government would undertake fundamental changes in the structure of educational finance so that more or less equal resources would be distributed to all school districts.

When the four scenarios are considered together, it must be concluded that during the 1980s the future federal role in education will not be dramatically different from what it was in the late 1970s. One should not expect to find either a total elimination of federal aid nor a major increase in expenditures. Most likely, allocations will decline in current dollars, and commitments in constant dollars will be even less. It is also likely that special programs such as Title I and Impact Aid will bear the brunt of the cuts as block grants replace the categoricals. Interest groups will learn to live with these changes, the Big Six will squeeze the more specialized interests to the sidelines, and slowly education will be taken out of a partisan framework. With less emphasis on reform, educational policy will be less important to liberal Democrats. With fewer regulations, educational programs will be less offensive to conservative Republicans. A small, stable, unexciting federal role will have bipartisan support.

Aid to Nonpublic Schools

We have put to one side the question of nonpublic education both because it may be treated quite separately in the political arena and because, in the event that it is not, the issue could confound the assessments just concluded. While aid to nonpublic schools is unlikely, it is the one element in the current picture that could make the 1980s one of the most fascinating decades in the history of American education. Under some circumstances, this issue could transform the structure of the American educational system; an Administration committed to staying out of educational policy could instead shake

that system to its very roots. Although we think that this is quite unlikely to happen, the possibility is at least worth examination.

Aid to nonpublic schools has been on the federal agenda for decades. Many Catholics feel that they are taxed twice -- once when they pay their state and local taxes, and again when they pay tuition to send their children to a parochial school. Church leaders are aware that in most other industrial countries, including Great Britain, Australia, France and Germany, nonpublic education receives a government subsidy. Similar support has not been forthcoming in the United States in part because Catholics have always been a small minority with limited political influence, in part because nonpublic education has not enjoyed the prestige that it receives in Europe, and in part because the Supreme Court has interpreted the First Amendment of the Constitution in such a way as to preclude direct support for elementary and secondary (but not higher) education.

Catholics and others interested in nonpublic education have always felt that their best chance to obtain government aid has been through political action at the national level. Efforts by individual states to provide monies to nonpublic schools have usually been ruled unconstitutional. But if aid to nonpublic schools is a national decision taken by Congress and signed by the President, it is likely to be treated more gingerly by the Supreme Court. Indeed, the courts have never ruled unconstitutional the substantial aid given to nonpublic schools under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In part this was avoided by emphasizing in the legislation that the programs were for the benefit of the child, not for the benefit of the school offering the instruction. But it is equally likely that the court was deterred from ruling unfavorably by the fact that the policy, as approved by the other two

branches of government, seemed to represent a national consensus.

In recent years the child benefit theory has opened quite a new opportunity to nonpublic school supporters. Numerous scholars and policy analysts have proposed a tuition voucher plan, which would give parents a subsidy that they could use to purchase education for their children from whatever school they pleased. The policy innovation has been especially appealing both to radicals who dislike compulsory features of public schooling and to conservatives, who feel that competition among institutions is likely to improve service quality even while reducing its cost.

The tuition voucher plan has many variants. Liberals propose plans that give disproportionately large vouchers to children from low-income groups and stipulate a variety of controls with respect to pupil characteristics for schools eligible to receive the vouchers. Moderates propose similar vouchers for all children. Conservatives propose tax deductions or tax credits, which can be easily administered through the Internal Revenue Services and involve minimal regulation of schools. Critics of these last two options complain, however, that tax deductions especially benefit those who pay the most in taxes and tax credits do not address the educational needs of the lowest income groups.

A tax credit plan was proposed in the Senate in 1979 and came within a few votes of passage. The Republican party endorsed such a plan in the 1980 elections, and the Reagan Administration has endorsed (though it has not yet vigorously pushed) some sort of tax credit. Sometime during 1981 or 1982 it is very likely that a proposal of this kind will pass the United States Senate and will be given serious consideration in the House of Representatives. One of three outcomes is likely to occur.

Tax credits are defeated. The most likely outcome is that this program

will not pass Congress. On this issue the public school interest groups will act as a cohesive group. Nothing is more threatening to public school officials than the possibility that their monopoly over the delivery of educational services be disrupted. Tuition voucher experiments have been sabotaged by teacher groups; they have been defeated in referenda when proposed to the general public; and they have not been well received in Congress. Even a modest tax credit scheme is likely to provoke strong, united action by public school officials, and such influence is the greatest when it is used to defeat proposed legislation or otherwise maintain the status quo.

The places where groups can win such a struggle even in the face of strong Administration support are multiple. The program can be held up in the House Committee on Education and Labor, which has always been a public school stronghold. If it is offered to the floor of the House, any bill that is not identically passed in both the House and the Senate must go to conference committee, and enemies of tax credits are likely to try to keep it from ever emerging from that committee. It is not even clear the legislation could win even if it reached the floor of both the Senate and the House. While some northern Democrats with Catholic constituents would vote for the proposal, their support is likely to be offset by defecting Republicans and southern Democrats, who come from districts where the nonpublic school is all but nonexistent. Moreover, it is not clear that nonpublic education is a top priority of the Reagan Administration. Although the idea is endorsed in principle, the executive branch has thus far focused its energy on reducing expenditures and cutting taxes. Inasmuch as tax credits are an indirect public expenditure, which officials such as David Stockman, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, generally oppose, executive enthusiasm for this innovation may be

less than wholehearted. All things considered, aid to nonpublic schools has less than a fifty-fifty chance of winning Congressional approval.

Modest tax credits are approved. Even though these negative factors must be taken into account, there is still a reasonable chance that tax credit proposals will overcome the opposition of public school people and secure Congressional passage. Any initial tax credits are likely to be modest, involving only a few hundred dollars per pupil. Such an outcome becomes more likely if the Reagan Administration makes this issue one of its top priorities, a possibility suggested by recent prominent appointments in the Department of Education. Pressure for tax credits could also increase as a result of the recent report by the National Opinion Research Center, under the direction of James Coleman, which seems to have found higher performances by students in nonpublic than in public schools (Coleman, Hoffer & Kilgore, 1981). Also, an intense campaign by nonpublic supporters that now includes both Catholics and a variety of evangelical Protestant groups might be enough to gain the margin of a victory. Clearly, this possibility increases if Republicans do well in the 1982 Congressional elections.

Should tax credits be provided for tuition paid to a nonpublic school, the interest group picture in Congress would change. After the passage of tax credits, a variety of groups representing Catholic, Protestant, and secular private institutions would become part of the lobby for private education. As time passed, these groups would gain political sophistication, expertise about the policy area, and access to policy makers. Pressures to increase the size of the tax credits or to supplement them with a tuition voucher plan would be likely. These groups might either oppose increased aid to public schools or trade support for such legislation (or at least lack of opposition) for a

similar courtesy on the part of teacher organizations and other public school supporters. As the costs of nonpublic education would be reduced to the consumer, the size of the nonpublic sector would increase from the present relatively small 10 percent, and the constituency for nonpublic education would grow. Policy change would have altered the pattern of interest group activity, which in turn would help to perpetuate and expand the policy innovation.

Tax credits become a major political issue. Still a third possibility, less likely than the first two, is possible in the 1980s. Tax credits may not be passed, or, if passed, they may be passed in such small amounts as to leave nonpublic school advocates dissatisfied. But instead of the policy remaining a question for committee deliberation and interest group pressure, it could become a key social issue dividing the two political parties. National attention might focus on the relative merits of public and nonpublic education.

Issues of family life have in the last few years become a matter of increasingly urgent political concern. Abortion is the most important of these questions. Laws protecting the right to life of an unborn fetus have gained the active support of the Catholic Church, evangelical Protestants, the Republican party, and politicians of many persuasions. At the same time, a woman's freedom of choice is defended by women's groups, some mainline Protestant churches, and most liberal political leaders. Closely related issues include crime, capital punishment, divorce laws, equal rights for women, and sex education. If aid to nonpublic schools should provoke a bitter conflict in Congress, many of the groups organized around these other issues might well become involved in a tax credit dispute. Teacher organizations, labor groups,

and the two political parties might all enter the fray. If this should occur, it would be only an exaggeration of conflicts that aid to nonpublic schools have evoked in the past.

Should these controversies become intense, they might have a costly effect on public education at national, state and local levels. A consensus in support of public education might give way to a controversy between a growing nonpublic sector, serving an increasingly middle class clientele and credited with a relatively high level of academic services, and a public sector, seen more as a charity institution serving minorities and the poor. Although public school organizations may win the early battles in such a campaign, there is a danger that such a struggle, if fought out over the decade of the 1980s, could fundamentally alter the nature and role of the public schools. These events are unlikely. But under the right conditions -- declining educational standards in the public schools, a worsening economic picture in the country at large, growing social conservatism, continued Republican strength in Washington, and too close an alliance between public education and only one political party -- the worst fears of public school people might be realized.

Conclusions

Projections into the future are seldom correct. In the late 1950s Munger and Fenno (1962, ch. VII) expected that a continued group stalemate would prevent significant federal aid to education in the near future. After the passage of ESEA in 1965, many expected federal aid to education to grow exponentially so that eventually a third of all educational finance would come from the federal government. In the late 1970s, Turnbull, Smith and Ginsburg (1979) suggested that categorical programs were so well-entrenched that

"killing a program is almost prohibitively difficult politically since every program has its staunch defenders" (p. 23). In light of the policies of the Reagan Administration and its present political strength, it is tempting to predict that in the 1980s the federal role in education will be reduced to little more than a minimal role of research and data collection, as has been recommended by the Heritage Foundation (Docksai, 1980).

According to incrementalist theory, changes occur only on the margins (Dahl & Lindblom, 1980, pp. 79-88). What has been done in the past is likely to be similar to what happens in the future, except for some relatively modest adjustments. Such a prediction rests on the assumption that multiple influences shape federal policy: changes in one factor, even if dramatic, are usually offset by countervailing changes in another factor. It further assumes that policy at any one point in time is the result of a political balance that approximates fairly well the preferences of the public at large. Any massive deviations from existing policy is likely to provoke strong response from some quarter.

Our analysis is, on the whole, quite consistent with incrementalist theory. In our view, Republican efforts to cut educational expenditures are likely to be partially offset by interest group activity and Democratic efforts in the House of Representatives. Moreover, Republicans are likely to be most influential only if the economy revives, the very circumstances under which educational interests are most likely to persuade Congress that more monies for social purposes are affordable. If the balance of political power swings in the opposite direction, and Democrats gain the upper hand, one should not expect that rapid increases in educational funding will thereby occur. For such a Democratic gain is most likely to occur only if economic difficulties

persist, a condition which will dampen enthusiasm for policy innovation.

But while we expect only marginal changes (mostly on the downward side), we would be more confident of the prediction if the federal role in education had wider political acceptance. A review of the history of federal policy, and the group pressures affecting it, has only emphasized how partisan, how ideological, how conflictual an arena this has been. The two major political parties debated over federal aid to education in the forties and fifties, when Democrats demanded a greatly expanded role, while Republicans said monies should at most be used only for construction purposes. In the 1960s the Democrats swept important legislation through Congress with only token Republican opposition, but these changes did not imply a partisan consensus, only the domination of one party over the other. When Republicans gained the Presidency in the 1970s, they attempted to reduce federal regulations and cut overall expenditures; only a Democratic majority in Congress modified this program. Today, the new Administration, with strong support on the Hill, is even more firmly convinced that educational policy is best determined at state and local levels.

When issues are understood in partisan, ideological terms, there is as much a chance for rapid, decisive change as for incremental movement. If either party should get a strong upper hand, they can move educational funding either upward or downward, in accord with party philosophy. Interest groups can retard or modify this process only if the balance of power between the two parties is fairly even. In the end, one cannot predict the future of the federal role in education without a capacity to predict the outcome of future elections. Such a soothsayer, were he to be found, would certainly be writing on a larger stage.

Table 1. Federal Expenditures for Educational Programs by the Office of Education, 1960-1982

Program	Fiscal Year						Carter Proposals	Reagan Proposals
	1960	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980	1982	1982
	(in millions)							
Vocational Education	45.2	54.5	255.2	416.9	590.9	622.4	779.2	623.2
Federally Impacted Areas	258.2	334.3	506.4	648.6	598.9	619.5	401.0	408.0
NDEA	52.8	42.5	75.8	47.8	29.0	31.2	---	---
Educationally-deprived Children	---	---	1,049.1	1,570.4	1,760.8	3,010.6	3,873.2	43.2
Bilingual Education	---	---	---	26.0	79.5	148.6	209.0	144.0
Education for the Handicapped	.4	5.0	41.0	93.1	191.4	814.1	1,225.0	0.0
Emergency School Aid Assistance	---	---	7.4	92.2	204.0	321.2	306.0	0.0
Other Consolidated Programs[1]	10.7	29.0	311.8	224.9	297.0	323.1	449.9	155.9
Other Programs[2]	17.7	19.9	138.3	232.6	361.7	446.0	344.1	81.8
Local Block Grants	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	3,647.0
State Block Grants	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	715.0

Table 2. Impact of Political and Economic Factors on Group Activities and Federal Educational Policy (enumerated in the order they are most likely to occur).

Economic Factors	Conservative Republican Dominance	Liberal Democratic Dominance
Economic Growth	1. Moderate reductions in federal support; shift to block grants; modest expansion of aid to nonpublic schools	4. Moderate to substantial increases in federal support; consideration of greater fiscal equity among school districts; no aid to nonpublic schools
Economic Stagnation or Decline	3. Sharp reducations in federal support; shift to block grants; no aid to nonpublic schools	2. Slight increases in federal support; continued categorical programming; no new aid to nonpublic schools

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